

"What is your name?"

Does a pony make their name or does a name make the pony?

Repeating over and over, the words had no rhythm, as if they echoed from the vocals of something unnatural, forced out from the heart of something that had no language its own. The words repeated again. I would not answer their call.

The blank room's white walls were glaring, too perfect, and too clean to be real. To be the reality I was forced to call my own. This was a lie. The cameras on the far side of the room hissed and buzzed, staring at me where I was trapped. Both forelegs tied to the wall behind me, my metal digits slack, there was a glowing face etched in the back of my hands flickering in an unwavering cheerful smile.

I saw my reflection in the window pane, the only source of color in the room, it was black. My single blue eye locked with my own gaze. How I had been bound in metal struts in the wall, constricting all movement was beyond me. I couldn't recall ever being here before either. I had a horn on my forehead? One bound to the base of my skull with a metal nut, rusted around the edges.

"Hello?" I called out to the voice asking me my name; it gave me the old tired response, "What is your name?" Again, I couldn't understand that. "Don't know. I don't know anything. What's going on? Who are you?" My question was answered by the tired phrase again, "What is your name?"

I abandoned the hope that there was someone on the other side of that inky glass. I wondered how long it would take for me to die.

I strained against the bindings, my strength wasn't enough. The bindings groaned then held, the metal creaking a chuckle of it's victory. I had just enough movement of my head to gaze down and find I had been tacked to the wall by large almost comical surgical tools. They were grounding me into the wall at my back, one of those insects you would see pinned to a board, a butterfly, dead and nailed to a piece of wax paper over cork-board for display. That thought made me think of someone. Someone I remembered on a billboard, one for 'Sparkle Cola' advertisements. Why did I remember that in a time like this?

The message repeated in a dull, monotonous tone; 'What is your name?' I put a beat to it, memorizing the length of the message and time in between that query. Fifteen seconds. I think. Why did the interval seem important? I pulled at the restraints, they still didn't budge.

I traced wires connected to me to a heart-rate monitor, which was unplugged from an outlet housing in the wall. There was an industrial light fixture over my head, flickering slowly. The light was shaking back and forth, towards one direction. To the left? There was a bed there, a bed on a gurney, overturned against the wall, blood was on it. All over it. Thick, heavy pools of red, long dried. Black ichors pulsed on the floor. The more I looked, the more things I had failed to notice became clear to me. The ceiling tiles were crooked and battered, wires hanging down from the gaps. This room's lie was hidden poorly. It was me; I had failed to notice anything.

Shouldn't I be in pain? I looked down; there were tools, large ones sticking into me. There's no way I should even be alive. Also, whoever bolted these restraints into the wall had done so quickly, they didn't seem to be normal fixtures. They were just bolted into the wall. Pressing back, the tools slid against my guts, causing a welled up mixture of red and black to trickle from the wound, Red, which was expected but utter numbness and black ooze wasn't normal. Was I sick? Yes, sick, which is why I was nailed to a wall and bolted in place by who-ever had been taking care of me. Makes perfect sense, to the crazy. I wasn't so sure if I was crazy or not. I couldn't even remember my name, who I was, it was all blank, except for that billboard against the blue sky, the one about a brand of soda. The soda I remembered had a distinctly carrotty after-taste.

I grit my teeth, huffing softly. I pushed forward, with my forelegs, which were the closest to the bolts locking me in place. I strained, and felt no give. Nothing, I actually felt nothing. I took a gulp of air reflexively, how long had I been holding my breath? I hadn't been breathing for a while. My heart sank, or maybe it would have, if I was sure I could feel its beat in my chest. That wasn't important. I was alive, moving. Of course I was alive. Just sick, yes, just sick with something. That's why I was in this room...Nailed to a wall?

In frustrating realization I slammed myself back and forth, screaming for that voice to just shut up, to escape this place that I had come to hate with deeply confused loathing. Back and forth I rocked, sending blood and black 'ink' against the wall and spewing forward. The struts snapped like dry timber after a dull whine at the abuse and snapped into the wall as they swung on their hinge. I fell forwards,

taking the objects jutting out of me to the floor. I found out why the lighting fixture was leaning when I tumbled towards the gurney and caught myself against it. The room was leaning. The wires going into the nodes on my chest were torn free, leaving a mess of cables snaking on the floor.

On my hooves again, well hooves and 'hands'; there were hands bolted to the bottom of my fore-legs. A retainer bolt fastened them deep into my leg and a metal strap held them in place. Rustic and functional, the metal digits with simple joints curled up from the floor.

I moved towards the heart-rate monitor, fighting against the lean wasn't too difficult, but walking was hard. It was like my mind couldn't remember and several times I fell to the floor, the tools that had pierced my body hammering against the floor. I'd have to remove those at some point. With tools, so I didn't risk bleeding out. I hooked myself back up to the heart-rate monitor again and plugged it in, curiosity haunting me.

The outlet was dead, and it refused to power on. I don't know why I was so relieved. I tore the wires from my chest, leaving the nodes in place. I didn't know how to remove them either, not without hurting myself. I doubt medical practitioner was my career choice for some reason.

"What is your name?" Spoke the tinny, melody-dry voice that kept repeating every so often. *Gee, if I knew I probably still wouldn't tell you.* My thoughts were to strangle whoever the source of that voice was. I might as well check my reflection closely in the blacked out-window on the other-side of the room. I didn't even remember what I looked like.

The face that stared back was that of a stallion with a white pelt and ragged, frayed, and wild red mane. I moved the hair from my face with those heavy jointed fingers and stared into the face. Blue eye, singular. The other side of my face where my eye would have been was wrapped in gauze and heavy bandages. I was covered in staples, holding my wounds shut. I looked like something out of Frankenmare's Monster. Stitched, nipped, tucked. Whoever worked on me did a decent job in treating whatever injuries I had suffered. I wore no clothing save for the large surgical implements sticking into me and the bandages wound around my chest and midsection.

I raised myself up, standing on my hind hooves and bracing myself against the glass, examining what was stuck in me. *It actually doesn't look so bad.* The instruments were small, and only large if you considered how long they were. I was still alive because of that, probably. I'd need medical attention to remove them.

"What is your name?" Again, every fifteen seconds it asked that. It was becoming an irritation upon other things. The cameras whirled and buzzed loudly. "Oh, once I get out, I'm going to have words for you. It won't be my name though." I spat, lowering myself to move to the door. I tried it, the door was locked. Of course it would be locked.

I was able to smash through my restraints; why not just do the same to the door? Because I might tear my stitches, that was why, poor whoever I am! I groaned at that sound logic and tried to figure out a way through the door. I was probably under heavy pain medication to not be able to feel a thing, so I probably wouldn't feel any damage I did to myself by accident.

After a few minutes of shuffling around and finding a good grip, I had the gurney in position in front of the door. I was fighting the list of gravity pulling off to the side, but I held it firmly in place with relative ease. Both of my odd hands were in place at either side of the bed, pulling it back and slamming it into the door several times.

Ker-Thwack! Ker-Thwak! KER-RUNCH! The door shot off its hinges in a shower of splinters and broken wood, slamming into the wall on the other side of the hallway that was now visible beyond the door. Without hesitation, I moved through the open doorway.

It had been barricaded by several gurneys and even a desk, all of which were now against the far-side of the wide hallway with its white tile and flickering lights. *If there's anyone here, they've probably heard that.* I told myself, looking both directions down the passage. Doors, dozens of doors flanked the hallway on either side. Each had a window looking in, even my room had one. With video feed and other information being displayed, all of them said the same thing, 'Off-Line'.

Mine was displaying something extra, a screen said, 'Mental Evaluation'--Which is why it repeated into the room, "What is your name?". That was the most irritating noise ever. If it was torture, it was brilliantly designed torture.

After using my brilliant knowledge of hacking, Otherwise known as 'a bit of hard and jagged debris in my hand', I disabled that aggravating voice forever. But what it had asked still bothered me. I didn't remember my name, and all I could remember was fragmented things, things that didn't matter to me now.

Left or right, both hallways stretched out before me, and each window was dark, with a door just like mine. Heavy wooden doors reinforced with metal plates. I was surprised that I'd gotten out so easily. Some of the doors, like mine were barricaded, not to keep anything from getting in, but to keep whatever they kept inside from getting out.

On the far left side, there was an assorted pile of furniture. Desks, tables, chairs, arranged to look like a gunner's nest. A choke point. Bullet casings and remains of spent magazines littered the area. I found a few still had rounds in them. I took them, recovering what ammunition I could from them. 5.56 mm. How I recognized it I had little idea, but I knew they were for an assault rifle of some kind.

A battle had taken place here, and for all the damage, there wasn't a single body for how much blood was smeared against the walls and floor. I was under the suspicion someone had simply hosed the entire corridor past the barricade in blood to let it dry into a coat of sparse and patchy paint. I had no weapon; going in the direction of the carnage was a bad idea. I turned around and went back over the barricade.

I guess 'Right' was the right way to go, to spare myself any gruesome details. I followed along the hallway, keeping my eye on every window I passed. One room had its window broken outwards, the reinforced glass peeled in jagged reams. Inside I saw a room identical to my own. They were all procedural. A heart-rate monitor and what I guessed to be a life-support system, industrial lighting, listing to one side due to the floor's tilt, a hospital bed obscured by a stained sheets and a pony in a lab-coat, laying on his side, facing away from the window.

I should just keep moving, ignore what I've seen. I'm certain this place has been

attacked. That I could have been tortured by whoever had done this terrible thing. The drugs were heavy lead in my veins--So heavy that the burden of remembering had been forgotten just to be able to move. But here, I stopped. I had to see if he was alright. I might not be the only survivor of whatever happened.

“Hey, hey! Are you alive?” I asked, my voice dry and brittle. I couldn’t feel how dry my mouth was. There was no response from the other side, he was still as the barricades and discarded medical equipment I kept seeing everywhere. The pony in that room, if alive, was currently unconscious. I couldn’t make out any rise or fall of his chest either. I was going to have to enter the room to be sure they were alright, even though all evidence pointed to it just being a body, I hoped it wasn’t. I hoped they were alive, and I hoped they had answers.

The door was locked, but after proving myself with the door to my room, this was no problem. I found a nearby wheelchair that had been discarded, and slammed through the door after two impacts, splintering the wood and metal door into the room. The hull of the door slammed into the ground with a loud ‘WHAM’ and scattered dust.

I covered my muzzle with my metal prosthetic fingers—they were proving very useful, seeing as I was struggling to use my telekinesis while heavily medicated. I moved into the room and skirted around the hospital gurney, only now realizing why there was a sheet over it. There was a lump beneath the stained cover, in the shape of a body. The air smelled heavy with rot and decay. Most alarming, however, was that holding the sheet against where the head of the patient should be, a large medical blade had been stuck into the head, trapping the cover there in place. The body was also strapped down.

Why they would strap a corpse down escaped me, but the patient could have been secured before expiring. That was a much softer word to use than ‘Face-raped by surgical tools’. The air was thick with rot and decay from this act, it must have been rotting for a few weeks. The lights flickered over head, casting shadows that moved in haunting sways. The generators must be over-taxed or damaged. I didn’t want to stick around for when they might finally fail, this hospital, if I could even call it that would be even more difficult to travel through in darkness.

Ignoring the body on the gurney, more out of respect for the dead than fear, whoever I

was, I wasn't squeamish, I moved to the body lying on its side. The stallion facing away wasn't moving at all, and when I rolled him over I came face to skull with him—He was almost entirely decayed away, and little remained of him. He had tufts of silvery gray hair stubbornly clinging to his scalp, and his lower jaw was missing. There was too much decay to discern how he died.

I gagged, retching softly; the sight of such grisly death was beginning to overwhelm me. The urge to vomit grew, but nothing would come up, and there weren't any spasms of my body trying to throw up. I wanted to but couldn't.

From this 'mystery' pony I had discerned a few things—Time had passed, and I wasn't sure how much. The attack happened, or whatever befell the hospital, then they died. This was the only body I had found. A card dangling on a lanyard around his neck read:

Dr. SteelGraft
Clearance Code: Blue
Surgical Team: S
Senior Surgery Staff

My good deceased friend had been a doctor here, and not just any doctor, but a highly trained one. He had a strange name for a doctor, too. It sounded more like a name a smelter or a steelworker might have or give themselves. I took the lanyard from him, and stripped the body of its long trimmed Doctor's Coat. It may have smelled, and may have been on a corpse for who knows how long, but I was wearing nothing but old bandages and needed to cover up.

I was only a little smaller than SteelGraft had been, so the coat was loose on me, it felt natural. As natural as a horribly blood-stained hardly white anymore coat could feel. I was beginning to question the morbid state of mind I had, and wonder who exactly I was.

That would come later; first, I had to check for anything else that was useful. Snaking the metallic digits into the coat's pockets carefully I extracted a few things of use, a few bits, faded with age, a bottle cap, and a recording. I had no way of playing the recording; I'd need something to play it for me. Wait, a note? A slip of paper, torn in the middle and bloodied so only half could be read;

‘Patient No. 39’

----erSquash

Severe trauma to the trunk, life support ----- . Prognosis poor, ---tal evaluation promising.

Shows desire ----- see it through. Has family-----

----- lifestyle. ----- Signing approval of ButterSquash ----- pending expiration of

Complications: Expediting expiration artificially.

Most of the file didn’t make any sense, and why it was bloodied and torn up in a coat’s pocket? The whole piece was dismissible, holding no clues that held anything I needed. The last line, that caught my attention. ‘Expediting expiration artificially’—If that meant what I thought it did, then SteelGraft may have ‘expedited’ the pony on the gurney to an early discharge.

So now the doctors were killing patients? Why? To save on supplies? That straight forward answer socked me in the gut, and I could almost sympathize with the doctor, it must not be easy terminating a patient. But the method of stabbing them in the head with a surgical tool was cruel and for that, there was no pity in my heart.

What if I had been ‘expedited’ myself, but had the fortune to survive somehow? The thought chilled me, and suddenly I felt like not finding anyone alive was the safest choice for me.

A rattling shift from the gurney shook my nerves, the lights flickered again and I backed up until my flanks touched the gurney bed, turning I came to face something that only in my nightmares had happened—A corpse that moved.

‘Buttersquash’, who was possibly the patient in this room, was squirming in his restraints. If he hadn’t been dead for what I assumed were weeks, it wouldn’t have been that bad. I reckoned he’d be somewhat pleasant to deal with in life.

The lights flickered again, and went out for the longest few seconds I had ever experienced up until this point. I heard snapping of cloth and the ping of torn metal. The lights flickered to life and I watched the corpse of this room’s former resident sit up on the bed,

coversheet held in place over him by the fat surgical blade pressing in through his skull. A dull rattle of breath echoed from the creature, and a black spray of sick bled through the cover where its mouth would be.

Fear raced through me, wide-eyed I could not look away, but it wasn't petrifying fear. It was a morbid fear, like it might be the last fight I'd ever get to touse in. I was equally excited, something inside me got a rush from the danger.

'Fuck me with an airship's Bowsprit and fly me into Celestia's burning Sun.' My mind was certainly filled with a collection of oddly nautical curses, mostly involving airship slang.

The body continued to move, pushing a hoof out towards me, and wearing that sheet, looked like a 'ghost' costume a foal would wear on Nightmare Night. Odd, how I remember these unrelated holidays while I'm confused and about to die.

'Clik' 'Whirr'—the sound of a blade revving up, and the sheet was torn asunder by a rotary saw-blade that was...Attached to the body. The sheet fell away in tatters to reveal with heart-stopping terror what I was faced with; a blend of corpse, fear, nightmare, and machinery.

Buttersquash, or as the paper had called him, Patient No. 39 was a pale green stallion earth pony with a blade sticking into his head looking like a faux horn. He had one soft hazel eye that was milled over by the glassy thousand-yard stare of death; the other was dangling from its gaping socket. His torso on the left side was caved and had been reinforced by steel framework surgical attached to his ribcage and spine. His body was marred and decayed, and very little of a soft blonde mane remained. One of his forelimbs had been replaced with an industrial construction saw, weaponized for less than constructive purposes.

I stepped back, my ass pressed against the farthest wall from this monster. The creature gazed at me dumbly, tilting its head down to the lanyard around my neck, then to my face. I saw its facial muscles twitch. It launched itself off the bed with a gurgling roar, the buzz saw spinning to life in efforts to end mine.

Raising my metal prosthetic, I intercepted the buzz saw in a hail of sparks, the metal blade biting into the digits. Without thinking, I brought my other hoof around and struck the beast in the side of the head, knocking it to the floor in a sprawl of decayed flesh and sparking metal.

It recovered quickly, rolling onto its hooves, some of its body parts rotating around in full complete circles until it was facing me again. I was already moving to the door as fast as I could. A saw blade whirled over the top of my head and stuck into the door-frame. It could launch buzz saws...

“A buzz saw wielding zombie robot! Is this really happening?” I asked myself, tearing down the hall in the direction I was going before my delightful detour into the room of ‘Buttersquash’. I just had to outrun it.

More buzz saws flew over my back and into walls, turned over furniture and make-shift barricades. I thanked the Goddesses for whoever put these here, because without their cover, I would be ribbons by now.

At the end of this hallway there was a large set of double doors, but also, about sixty yards of wide open area without any cover or discarded equipment I could use in my defense. It was a straight shot all the way there, and the creature chasing me wasn’t far behind.

Another saw blade sunk into an overturned cabinet I was currently ducked behind, piercing the metal and sticking out from the distended and gaping wound mere inches from the tip of my nose. I got an idea, a crazy idea that may result in my utter evisceration, but running down that hall in the open would be a death sentence.

I tried to lift the cabinet with my Telekinesis, unicorns had that, right? The magic of their horns allowed them to lift objects. Except I didn’t know how to, and just thinking about lifting the cabinet provided no result. I opted to grab it instead, gripping the metal frame, which sagged under my heavy and thick prosthetic fingers I up-righted the cabinet and braced my back against it. The sounds of breaking glass and shuffling items inside made me wish I had time to investigate its contents.

“Come on, you ugly horse-apple sucking plot bandit! Your mother was a vacuum cleaner and your father was a tungsten resistor!” I goaded it, silently hoping it could be spurred into more rage. I noticed the cabinet shake, and a warbling cry on the other side of the cabinet.

I pushed my weight into the heavy metal cabinet and toppled it onto the creature formally known as Buttersquash, the metal doors buckling and landing onto the beast with a solemn and thick ‘WHUD’. “Phew, drop something heavy on it. That’s always a solid solution.” I couldn’t help but laugh and then scream as a saw blade pierced the back of the cabinet. “You just don’t quit!”

Why did I feel a heavy cabinet would be enough to kill it? I had to have a serious introversive conversation with myself when I wasn’t about to die. My hooves flew across the ground beneath me in a flurry of clops and metal twangs, the doorway at the end of the hall seemed to stretch out forever. The buzz saw echoed behind me, spitting sparks into the air like a breath of dragon’s fire.

Faster, I needed to go faster, that cabinet wouldn’t hold that thing for long. The distance closed between me and the door, closer and closer I grew to it, the more and more worried I became that the creature would soon have a clear shot at my ass.

I reached the door, slamming into it, it regrettably did not budge. It was sealed. I was doomed; this was how I was going to die. The massive reinforced double doors was made of heavy metal, riveted and spot welded, bearing oppressively small windows that let scant flickers of light through.

I punched the door in anger, slamming my metal knuckles into the door, and then banged my make-shift hand into the door, trying to push it open with no result. The heart-wrenching sound of peeling metal and the gurgling, phlegm filled roars of rage made me realize I’d soon be meeting SteelGraft soon, in the afterlife.

‘Please insert card.’ – The same mechanical voice that had plagued me in my hospital room rung in my left ear like the soft voice of a sweet, haughty mare. There was a card reader to my left, caked with blood over its lens and flickering. It was small and unobtrusive.

“Card? Do I have an ID?” I asked myself numbly, before I remembered SteelGraft’s identification card slung around my neck.

“Oh sweetheart, I’d kiss you if you had a mouth.” I cooed in relief, looking to the card reader. I almost felt guilty about bashing the voice recording outside my room with a rock. I tore the card from my neck and began pressing it to the reader. The machine blared out a negative read and flashed red.

‘Card misread. Please try again or try a different card.’ The voice taunted me, playing hard to get with me, and then volunteering me to play ‘chicken’ with a buzz saw wielding undead monster. Really, I wasn’t into this brand of foreplay. I rubbed at its lens, trying to get some of the blood off before trying again.

‘Bleep’ ‘Card Misread, try again or use a different card.’ I tried spitting on the reader, with what little saliva I could work up and feverishly rubbed to loosen the scab of red film. It wouldn’t read the card, and if it didn’t read it, I was going to die. I morbidly wondered if it’d decapitate me or just split me in half, or if it’d torture me. I resolved to make it earn the right if it came to that by not making myself easy prey.

The creature formerly known as Buttersquash had finally broken free, tearing out from the cabinet and destroying it utterly in its rage-fueled dissatisfaction with the cabinets’ manufacture and use as a bludgeon against the undead. It then turned its attention towards my position, raised its left foreleg and revved the saw to a spinning frenzy of sparks. The blade left the arm with an explosive zap of crackling energy and began to close the distance.

‘Bleep’ ‘Card Misread, try again or use a different card.’ The whore of a card reader mocked me now. Did I say she sounded sweet and haughty? No, it sounded like a whorse. A dirty, filthy overpriced---‘Blip! Card Accepted. Doors Unlocking’---Reasonable, sweet, darling, wonderful card reader. I would kiss it if it had a mouth and wasn’t caked in blood.

I pushed through the doors, which gave and tumbled into the next room, my coat fluttering, my mane mashing into my only uncovered eye, and I think I bit my tongue. I spun

around to slam the door shut, the sinking teeth of the metal saw making a dent bulge outwards from the door. I gave a soft sigh of relief, having narrowly escaped certain death.

I turned my back to the door, sitting down, drawing breath into my lungs. I might have been holding my breath again, during that stressful venture through the row of rooms beyond this 'gate of death'.

I blew the bangs from my eye, reaching up to pin the scarlet strands behind one of my ears and looked about the room. This room was different from all others previous, this room looked like an adjoining 'security checkpoint' of some-kind. There were metal detectors standing stoically at the end of the room leading to a foyer of some-kind.

The room I was in wasn't particularly big, only a dozen feet across, and there were inactive scanners and a set of security turrets flanking either side of the door. A single security terminal sat behind a desk to my right, and moving around it I found a body, the skeleton of what I figured had been a security guard at some point. A picture on the wall behind the desk was that of a town with happy, colorful buildings and hay-thatched roofs. I could make out from it one of the buildings had a medical symbol of a red cross on white, in the foreground of the image. A small hospital, much different from this one, I bet the floors there had been level, at least. In golden, gilded letters mounted in the frame it said;

Stable Heart Hospital
Founded in Ponyville
Director: Doctor Stable

That was quaint; it looked like it was from a long time ago, during simpler times. Where the dead stayed dead and didn't have buzz saws and metal parts bolted to them. I looked down to the skeleton, it had an old barding, loosened from the form by decay, and looking like it had suffered damage, pierced through by rounds. There were bullet holes on the wall behind where it laid death by bullet perforation.

The barding was too damaged to be of any use to me, but what was in the holster was more my speed, a weapon. It looked like it was a type of revolver, checking it over, it was a .38 caliber revolver with four rounds in its cylinder that I checked. It had a mouth-grip for firing, and in my heavy prosthetic hands, I'd find it difficult to use. It was better than nothing. I took the

holster as well, binding it over my left foreleg and slipping the gun back into its home.

The 5.56 ammunition I'd found in the hall wouldn't work for this firearm, so I would just have to carry the magazine I'd refilled with the ammo until I came across something I could use with it. On the security desk, there was a set of terminals, their screens flickering green with the glow of operation. The logo of Stable-Tec was just above the input for the keyboard, built for hoof-use.

I raised myself so I could reach the controls, brushing the bangs from my eyes once again, I began to interact with the computer, and several lines of words told me that this was a log of all visitors or doctors that came through the security check point. It wasn't locked, so either it was still logged in under the security user, or they never bothered to lock it. I was lucky, I didn't know the first thing about hacking a terminal, and the extent of my knowledge had been bashing the mental evaluation machine just outside my hospital room.

'Security Logs—Administrative Security Member Bullet Sink'

Log # 345

Log # 567

Note to Staff

Activate Turret Defense

So, there were a few logs on the current screen, and the dead security member who had died to gunfire had a most fitting name, 'Bullet Sink'. Reflecting briefly on the wrongness of such a coincidence, I began checking the logs, starting with 'Log #345' and brought it up to view, reading it, it said;

'Visitor Log #345'

A young mare and her child came in today, to visit one of the Veterans in the intensive Care Wing. She was pleasant, but was very argumentative when we ordered her to strip off all jewelry, including the wedding ring on her horn. We explained that she couldn't enter with any foreign objects for safety reasons. I was at a loss to explain why. I need to speak with Staff over this; surely a wedding band for the horn isn't violating our visitor permissions. I just think we're upsetting patients with how tight security is. I put her ring in the security safe behind the desk. The code to unlock it should still be the same.

Nothing useful, a message as old as this didn't have any value to me. The promise of whatever might be in that safe was alluring, but I suspected the ring was returned to its owner, unless she and her child perished shortly after this log was filed. I hoped they managed to escape, or that the attack happened while they were not here.

With hesitant strokes on the keyboard, I brought up the next message, Log #567, which seemed a bit more urgent than the calm one I read earlier.

‘Security Log #567’

We had a situation with a visitor earlier today. They tried sneaking something into the Veteran’s Wing, I think it was poison. The individual was detained for questioning, but remains quiet. We believe he was going to try killing one of the veterans in the intensive care unit. I’m glad we were able to catch it; the fallout from such a thing would have been disastrous for the clinic and us. We need to take good care of the ponies that gave limb and livelihood for Equestria.

I pulled back from the screen, my expression grim and my mind filled with impure thoughts of conflicting nature. I now knew I was a Veteran of War, and that wing I’d come from was the Veteran’s ICU wing. I also knew that security was incredibly tight to keep them safe. I pulled out the note I’d found on SteelGraft, looking down to the final line, ‘Expediting expiration artificially’ stood out through the smears of blood and yellow of age.

They hadn’t been good enough to protect patients from the whims of the doctors themselves. I didn’t understand why, other than saving on supplies, they’d ‘expedite’ the inevitable death of patients. And then there was ButterSquash, who was killed and tweaked on for what ends I knew little about. The more I discovered, the less I knew.

The doors to the veteran’s wing jumped as a body impacted it. I turned to see that ButterSquash had finally made it to the door and was now working on getting through it. I imagined the door was protected from tampering, but the nature of that creature would probably help it get through any obstacle to make me dead as the corpse nearby.

Out of a sense of completionist curiosity, I read the last security log, the one titled ‘Note To Staff’, figuring I had more than enough time to read the logs and find a way to block the door before the ‘patient’ managed to get through. The note read;

‘Note To Staff’

From the Desk of Dr. Stable

“I would like to remind all security staff that starting today, visits from family are

barred at this time, pending the investigation of the attempt of one individual on the lives of our Veterans. Families can leave gifts, which will be held, inspected, and delivered upon clearance. Furthermore, only staff of Blue Clearance is permitted. The turrets will target those that try to enter without Identification. Let's avoid workplace accidents, shall we?"

Sincerely, Hospital director of Stable Heart Veterans Hospital,
Doctor Stable.

The messages were useless for the most part, except now I knew the turrets wouldn't shoot me if I had my Identification card on me, if I was trying to enter the Wing, that is. Butter-Squash had no identification, as far as I knew, and maybe a little surprise would be healthy for my life expectancy.

I highlighted the 'Activate Turret Defense' and pressed the button, the turrets flanking either side of the door on the roof buzzed to life. I had to hoof it to StableTec, when they made something; it typically lasted through the abuse tossed at it. I just hoped the doors were just as durable.

I felt safer now, but didn't want to linger much longer. I checked for what valuables I could in the desk's drawers, a bottle of warm sparkle cola in one drawer, a dozen caps in another, which I ignored, and a small case of .38 ammo with fifteen rounds. Nineteen shots, I'd better make the rounds count. In the drawer, I found a magazine about firearms called; 'Hoofshod Hotshots', I stowed that away and closed the drawer.

The other terminal was locked with a password, which I didn't know. I was ill equipped to even try hacking into it, so I glazed over it. I didn't see the safe mentioned in the security log anywhere, and a jolt from the nearby security door spurred me to movement, ButterSquash was still trying to get through. I shouldn't linger.

I moved from where I was around the desk, finally taking in the ambience of the musty, still place I was in. The walls were a muted, calming white, almost like an eggshell blue, but so faint I could hardly tell. It was relaxing, but its effect wasn't strong, considering the horror waiting just outside the Veteran Wing door, I had plenty on my mind a soothing color couldn't calm.

Moving under the lowered arch separating the security checkpoint with the waiting room and foyer, I entered a sight of carnage, juxtaposed against the calm, pleasant lighting. There were comfy chairs, sofas, and end tables, all arranged to look like a large living-room. It even had a nice television in the corner, mounted high, playing static and snowfall on its screen. Corpses sat in chairs, long dead, mouths agape and heads tilted back towards the ceiling. Perhaps they were laughing at what was on the television, yes, that's what I told myself. I glazed over most the room, ignored the end tables covered in scorched books and preceded to the Help desk at the far right from the waiting room.

There was another body of a nurse, with hat sitting upon her head, faded, and tangled in a mass of soft auburn hair that clung into what little of her scalp remained. Not wanting to waste time, I jumped over the desk, looking for a map, a directory, or anything of value I could find. The medical supplies, if there had been any, were all gone now, and all that remained were clipboards, coffee cups that were starkly white, and paperwork on patients.

I did pause to glance at an old newspaper, 'The Free-Cloud Press', which had been a popular pegasus tabloid at the time, focusing on famous ponies and their lives. This one was featuring Photo-Finish, and ran the title 'Photo Finish Finished? Turn to page 47 to find out!' I didn't bother with it; I was merely interested in it because it briefly stood out to me.

There it was what I had been looking for, the directory, sitting framed on the wall across the room, on a swivel sign jutting from the wall. I suppose it must have rotated or swung at some point, but had since broken down. I moved over to it, fighting the lean of the floor which wasn't as extreme here, thankfully.

It waved there listlessly, back and forth. I grabbed it with my digits and swung it around to face me, looking at the map behind the glass. I was on the second floor Patient Ward, near the Veteran's Wing. A little star with the exclamation 'You Are Here' told me so. The elevators were passed the Foyer and to the left, according to the map. There was also a stair well there, and another set of stair wells just passed the Nursery Ward where they treated foals and infants.

I studied it further, in case I needed to know anything, like the location of a storage room, or the staff lounge. I wished I could just tear the map out of the case and take it with me. Well,

actually, there was nothing stopping me from doing that. I raised a foreleg and brought it down several times on the swivel sign's jutting frame until it shattered. I took the fairly large map and rolled it up, then folded it until it was somewhat manageable.

“There has to be an easier way to do this.” I muttered, half of the map sticking out of my coat pocket. I felt ridiculous; I’d need a saddlebag or tote of some kind to make carrying things easier. At least I had the map; navigation would be a lot easier. I was also grateful I knew how to read a map.

Now to leave this place, or try to, before I end up becoming one of the decorations sitting slack-jawed staring at the tattered ceiling tiles.

‘WHAM!’ And that door probably wasn’t going to hold forever, with how badly Buttersquash wanted to get me. I only hoped the turrets would take care of him if he did manage to get in.

Leaving the Foyer behind me, I entered a smaller adjacent room where the elevators should be, only to find a large pile of collapsed walls and pillars in front of the ruined elevator doors. Of course it wouldn’t be that easy, and getting through this was going to take a lot of effort.

There was nowhere I could go except through the ruined doorway leading into the Nursery Wing, where I would probably find no less than double the dangers I had encountered in the Veteran’s Wing. If I was going to go through there, I might want to be prepared. I checked the sidearm I’d acquired from the fittingly named Security Pony ‘Bullet sink’ and spun its revolving cylinder open. Yeah, I needed to reload, two shells down and fifteen in the box I had.

I pulled out the small box, emptied the dead cartridges and loaded fresh ones. That was fairly straightforward, the size of the weapon and its bulky ammo made it easy to grip. I referenced the magazine like it was an instruction manual, checking over the glossary for proper gun firing techniques. Glazing over the interviews, gun specs, and other things I didn’t need right now I came across what I was looking for.

It felt like a refresher more than learning something new, I felt like I was familiarizing myself with an old acquaintance. Closing the magazine after folding a couple corners for quick reference later, I felt less prepared than when I had read the magazine. It wanted me to use the mouth-guard for proper firing techniques.

“There’s no way I’m holding this in my mouth.” I spoke to myself dryly, looking to the mouth-grip dejectedly. Curiosity, one of my flaws leads me to at least try biting down on the guard, to identify the tongue trigger. “Hah Rahm ah surrasta tralk vriff disss?” I mumbled in frustration, my numb tongue was hard to keep track of, and I managed to fire off a round into one of the walls, just under a poster for the Ministry of Peace.

The poster of the butter colored mare stared back at me accusingly, and here I was steaming gun hanging from my mouth. I felt guilty for some reason, like I’d just done something horrible. The poster was tattered and worn, but its message was clear. The mare stared out with a sincere yet tired smile, below in bold letters it said;

‘Remember The Equitarian Oath’

I had no idea what it was, but it must have been important, oaths always were. The mare with the pink mane and lovely yellow pelt made me feel guilty for nearly putting a round in the poster itself. At the same time I felt like she would have forgiven me.

Okay, I was crazy, certifiable. I was getting emotional over an old poster of some mare I’d never met and probably would never meet. For all I knew, she was dead and the world had ended and the outside was populated by giant, violent leeches and dangerous oversized dust mites in little pirate hats that sailed the skies in dirigibles. I had a very active imagination.

“Did you hear that?” A gruff voice from the Nursery Ward, beyond the door, a voice, the voice of a pony, oh Praise Celestia’s Sun and the stars above.

“Yes, a gunshot, how could I not hear that?” Another voice, further inside the Nursery. This voice belonged to a mare, and had a thick, rough beat to it. Two ponies, what luck I had to found two ponies in this personal hell.

I pulled the gun from my mouth and holstered it, eagerly plodding through the door to the source of the voices. The drywall to my left exploded off the wall in a shower of gunfire before I could even open my mouth in greeting, and I threw myself to the ground as a door sailed overhead, torn asunder by the blast of a high powered shotgun.

“We got a live one!” Shouted the stallion, “Not for long though!” He sounded far too happy about finding me a target for his murder fantasy for my liking.

My ears rung like a bell, tolling in loud peals of ringing over the dry riverbed of my sanity. I rolled over, gazing up through the gaping doorway to my left where the stallion who nearly beheaded me with his shotgun stood.

A green earth stallion with the scent of a thousand asses wearing cobbled together armor that was protective only in the loosest term applicable. He was wearing a short barreled gun on a saddle-mount, his mad, beady eyes piercing the floating haze of dirt and fluttering papers at me, licking his yellow, jagged teeth dripping with saliva as if he were a venomous viper.

“It doesn’t seem to be one of those flesh-eaters, does it?” Called the voice of the mare down the hall, a wispy, thin pale-yellow unicorn mare wearing similar armor to the stallion peering down at me. Her flavor of mane-style was a greased up black mohawk, as if she had stuck her head into the service pool under the dry dock of a dirigible and slicked her mane up with the black sludge left over from a fluid change. Her way of speech didn’t match her appearance.

Rolling over, I coughed dryly, peeling a piece of discarded paper off my face that had become stuck there after I had thrown myself down. Reaching for my piece, I was swiftly reminded of my situation with a double barreled load of love pressing against my forehead, just under my horn, the metal of the barrel scratching against the nut affixing the horn to my head.

“Oh, sorry pretty boy, no heroics, and maybe I won’t shove this shotty under your tail and pump it into your unmentionables.” He spat, a spray of vile saliva spraying over my face. I

obliged begrudgingly and moved my prosthetic hand from my holster.

“There’s a good boy! I keep my promises, I’ll make this quick for yah!” He kicked a lever and I heard the gun click and expend a double set of shells, still smoking and a new set rotate into place. “It might not hurt as bad...” His eyes drifted to my chest, eying the medical instruments sticking out and with malicious glee he began stomping his hoof up and down.

It should have hurt, I should have been in agony, but whatever I had been pumped full of had kept me from feeling anything but the pressure and odd twisting sensation—Then it hit something else and pain lanced up my spine. I grit my teeth and red began oozing past my lips, but I didn’t scream, for as alien this pain was I wouldn’t give this sadistic fuck that pleasure.

He was stomping on me for what felt like an eternity where I was the dough in some sick pizza parlor of his horribly misguided childhood dream of joining the circus. The thoughts in my mind were consumed with the deep desire and urge to strangle him with his own intestinal tract and dangle him from the ceiling like a piñata.

The mare approached, watching it with contained amusement, pushing a discarded wheelchair over as she trudged passed it. The lighting flickered overhead, leaving only the scant traces of light filtering in through windows in one of the adjoining rooms.

“You take too much pleasure in this.” She rolled her eyes, cocking the lever on her rifle to drop a few rounds onto the ground, spent. “Just end it swiftly, spare the theatrics, Curbstomp.” Surely, she wanted him to kill me swiftly only to end the torture this brute was putting me through, a bemusing thought. It seemed the stallion stomping on me was named Curbstomp--What an odd name for a pony, perhaps it reflected the nature of their attitudes. Maybe the yellow mare was named ‘Yeast Infection’.

Curbstomp did what his name implied, stomping a final time over the surgical tools and cracking a few more of my ribs and embedding them inside further, a sick gurgle expelled from my lips. “Fine.

Can't blame a guy for havin' fun, bitch." He began swiveling the gun back to center on my forehead.

The mare looked displeased by such words, her upper lip curling and flying out liberally as she exhaled hard. "We must subscribe to different venues for our fun. Killing first and asking questions later hasn't earned you anything but a foul reputation."

"It earns me plenty of what I want. I just want his shit and a trophy off his corpse, like that damn horn!" He wanted to wrench my horn off after he killed me.

I felt a rush of anger directed at this wretched pony, I hadn't even gotten one word out to them and he was just going to murder me? Any reservation I ever had against enacting violence upon these one faded in a shade of boiling red. I grabbed one of the surgical tools from my chest and ripped it out, sinking it into Curbstomp's shoulder and pushing the shotgun away from me and into the floor—The double shell burst put a hole into the already weakened floor and kicked up debris.

Curbstomp screamed, blood oozing from where the long set of sharpened forceps had been jammed, and I consumed a bit of pleasure from his pained cry. For as much as I 'enjoyed' being his floormat, I preferred making him feel something jamming into his body.

Before the mare could react I'd already pushed myself up, spun around the stallion named Curbstomp and had my .38 special drawn and pressed against the side of his head in an awkward manner, holding it in my prosthetic digits—The mouth-grip wasn't designed for Hoof....Hand things.

The mare reacted as well as I thought she would, with aggression, her rifle moving to center on my head. I primed the revolver and the hammer cocked back. "One move and I'll turn his head into a centerpiece." I growled to her.

"Oh please, won't you allow me the pleasure?" Countered the mare unexpectedly, "More for me since I won't have to split my earnings with a waste of life like him." I had to agree with her, this earth stallion didn't have very many redeeming qualities to speak of.

"Don't fuck with me, Gangrene! I ain't wantin' to be skullfucked by maggots!" Curbstomp so eloquently put it; death would certainly be a lot of worm-corpse fuckery. He was terrified of the prospect, which made my position feel all more powerful. I didn't feel ready to just end his life, but neither of them knew my reservations on that matter.

Gangrene? That was her name? Fitting, it seemed I wasn't too far off in my guess, both were nasty infections. 'Gangrene', as the mare was called, looked me up and down, licking her lips with a type of predatory hunger I'd attribute to vicious forest fauna. Her eyes caught the identification card around my neck, and she took in the coat I was wearing. I could almost hear the gears turning in her head. "You're one of the doctors?" She asked, my thin disguise was more than enough to fool her, "I must say, you're pretty well preserved for a corpse." Her warm brown eyes rolled up and down over what she could see behind the smelly wall of stallion I was taking cover behind, as if appreciating a work of art.

"I'll make sure to give you the same compliment after I skull-bugger your brainpan with some .38 love, then." My silver tongued retort seemed to take her off-guard, and her eyes widened. "I have a medical degree in bullet perforation, I could show you my credentials but I left them in my office."

Then, she laughed, tilting her rifle down, "Tough as hard-tack and funny. Guess you ghouls survive so long for a reason. A gentle hoof ain't one of them." She visibly relaxed, wearing a smile that bordered on unsettling and charming. Was that respect? Respect between a predator and what she felt was an equally dangerous predator.

I didn't lower my guard, pressing the barrel firmly to the base of Curbstomp's skull, he whinnied out his displeasure and begged in plaintive little cries. "Can we be civil, or will I have to begin creating my own patients? And swiftly discharging them to the morgue." I was grim, Curbstomp didn't like how serious I sounded. His body was as stiff as death.

"We kin be civil! Honest!" Curbstomp sputtered, his eyes brimming with tears, "Right, Gangrene?"

The yellow mare contemplated Curbstomp's worth mulling it over and tapping the butt of her rifle against her flank a few times. She hummed a gravely tune and came up with her answer, "Actually, I have an idea that just might be worth your time. We'll leave your hospital and you in peace if you can help us get the drugs and goods we're after. Your life and Curbstomp's gun as an added bonus for your time, he won't mind too much, permitting neither of us shoot him for being a moron."

"But I'm using the gun!" Curbstomp stammered inimically. He shifted and gave Gangrene a wholly disapproving look, "Just shoot him already! Come on, your gun was pointin' at him and everything, you fucking traitor!"

“A coward like you has no use for that shotty if you refuse to use it smartly. I do not trust you to not blast our new business partner when his is back turned. He worked here, and that means he knows how to get the goods.” Gangrene seemed reasonable; I almost felt some sense of relief that she was comparably sane, if not business savvy for someone dressed for anything but success.

I began to lose interest in killing Curbstomp, partly out of pity, and partly because I wanted to not be so close to him any longer. He reeked, and his pelt was as repulsive as the thought of licking the floor in the ward hall we stood in. “Deal. Take off your gun, Curbstomp. Maybe if you behave, I won’t make use of my doctorate on you with it.”

Begrudgingly, Curbstomp stripped out of his battle-saddle and stood there, feeling naked. I removed the revolver from the base of his skull and he seemed relieved, but his eyes cast longingly at his weapon’s harness. “There, fuckin’ ghoul. You kin have it, just ‘slong as you make with the goods like Gangrene says.”

I hesitated to holster my weapon, my eyes trained on the pale yellow unicorn with the sharp eyes. There was a near mystifying strength in her, one that screamed that she was all about business. I thought I could trust her while she believed I knew things she wanted to know.

“So, you’re after the storage room, I take it?” I asked pointedly.

“If that’s the place that hasn’t been cleaned out, then yes,” The unicorn mare replied, scratching her ass with the duct taped edge stock of her lever action rifle, “I just don’t want to run into none of those feral ghouls. They take an ass-load of ammo to kill. And there worst kinds of them here.”

I figured what she was talking about was one of the things I left back in the Veteran’s Ward; there were more of those things. It was like it was my birthday, except instead of presents, every box was filled with a nightmare made material. I didn’t know what ghouls were, not exactly, but that dead thing that moved was probably it.

The two would-be tormentors had called me one too. Perish the thought that I was anything like Buttersquash, I didn’t launch killer buzz saws or murder doctors like SteelGraft. I pressed my lips together tightly and reached over, dragging the harness and shotgun towards me. I slung it over my back, having no idea how to actually put it on.

The lights flickered again; the panels covering the lighting fixtures were cracked and filled with a layer of dust and dead insects. Several had gone out forever, and some were stubbornly holding onto their light. I trotted into the room that Curbstomp had tried to behead me from and found a counter, clearing the left over wrappers and trash from atop it to roll out my map. The room was a delivery room, and had a skeleton on the metal table, padded with a torn and decayed foam cover. If you counted the infant skeleton resting in pieces over its mother's spine there were two bodies.

Behind me, Gangrene was helping the injured stallion pull the medical instrument from his shoulder, and a scream of pain delighted my ears, I hoped that it hurt as much as possible. "Oh, don't be such a pansy, baldy. You'll live." Gangrene cooed to him viciously. I was beginning to like her, so far she was the only thing that hadn't tried killing me yet. That and she was making Curbstomp feel pain. I still felt uneasy around them, but while I was needed, I had security.

The scream had traveled far in the halls, as did all the gunfire earlier. The yellow mare had spoken of other hostiles, and I hoped they'd not be attracted to us, though a darker part of me fancied the idea of introducing them to the horrors of the Veteran's Ward.

Light filtering in through a dirty cracked window allowed me to make out what I needed on the map, the route we'd have to take to get to the store room and a route to leave this hellhole once my part of the bargain was over.

"Hey, that's a neat map." Gangrene had slipped into the room and was close beside me, looking it over, her brow knitted tightly together, she couldn't make out where she was on it, or which floor to even look at, "Any idea where we are?" Genuine as she was, I grimaced, her proximity wasn't welcome, and the contact against my side was unpleasant.

A short flicker of something dashed through my mind, a word on the tip of my tongue devoured and swallowed before I could speak, disjointedly I spoke, "You never learned how to read a map?"

The mare shook her head silently.

I pointed to the room we were in with a heavy digit that reflected the light with dull sheen. I then traced down the hall to the end of the ward, and right along another passage and back along another hallway to where the storage room was, plainly written as 'Storage Room'.

“We’re here and we need to go there.” I stated with certainty.

The pale yellow unicorn nodded numbly, unable to read the map, so she simply believed me. “Right, and when we get there, you can let us in and we get our goods, right? No funny business?” Her ear flicked, catching my attention. I briefly considered she was keeping the worst company, she felt ill-matched standing next to the green earth stallion given her personality.

“As little as possible,” I assured quickly, brushing the bangs from my eyes, it was hard to see through tufts of hair dangling over my brow all the time. “You checked this area for ‘supplies’ already, I take it?” Trying to sound as educated as possible to pull off my appearance as a doctor here, I was certain I could almost pull off the necessary amounts of patient murder.

“We just got here, ran into a few ghouls...You showing up has been the highlight so far.” A hot snort went directly against my ear, she was unbearably close to me, and a few drops of machine grease fell onto my map as she leaned over me. “Also, lovecorpse, watch your ass, I’ll be watching you. Keeping that moron in line is hard enough without trusting somepony I just met,” she purred, venomous, seductive, and terrifying all in one single sentence.

I was repulsed by her advances, but I didn’t show it. I rolled up the map and stowed it away, “Just keep your gun aimed elsewhere.” I muttered, moving towards the doorway.

“What do I call you?” She asked suddenly. She cut off my path to the doorway by moving her rifle in front of me horizontally like a gate, held in the grasp of her telekinetic field. She began herding me back towards her, trying to rake me in with her rifle.

I moved back to her, not wanting to resist. I couldn’t deny the fact she was interesting, and was deeper than the simple idiot that had used my chest as a single hoof trampoline. “I want to know your name first.” I demanded.

She liked that, I thought, by the way she smiled, a wide, unpleasant and unsettling curve. “Well, you heard moron and I say our names, but a proper introduction is in order. I’m Gangrene, Viper Gang member, the moron outside is Curbstomp.” She leered, that smile never breaking, “And you are--?”

Looking down to the Identification card around my neck, and at the name on the shaped plastic, I held it before my eyes, “Doctor SteelGraft.” I recited begrudgingly, giving a soft snort. I didn’t like that

name, but it was all I could use. I could have used the unfortunately named security Officer's name, Bullet Sink, but I didn't want to follow in that aptly named stallion's hoofsteps.

"The name seems to fit, sort of. What are you a doctor of?" Her voice was pointed, like a direct and probing drill into my personal life. I was feeling more and more exposed.

"Uhm, the Perforatorial field. It's not an exact science. We treat...Holes." I was certain that was a doctory thing to...Doctor. I had no idea about a single thing about the field of medical aide, but I wasn't about to reveal that information. I wanted to get this over with. Gangrene seemed to be intensely interested in me for some reason. I hoped it was platonic, because she wasn't my type. Or maybe she was, I felt fairly new to these advances, though my interactions with her felt wholly natural.

"Oh, that field seems big. I mean, there are a lot of holes that could be doctored," she purred.

My level of comfort dropped like a rock sinking in a lake and I suddenly wished to be back in the Veteran Wing, hugging Buttersquash for the end he'd grant me. Instead, I smoothly replied, "I specialize in holes made by bullets. And making those holes." I hoped that would put an immediate end to this conversation.

The mare pulled her rifle up and trailed it back to her, "Good, that skill will certainly come in handy. I'm glad you know how to use that revolver. Just don't get yourself killed. And sorry about Curbstomp, he's a moron, but you won't have to deal with him long." There was truth to that, I hoped.

"Guys, you fuckin' done makin out in there, we got movement out here!" The green wall of meat wailed from the hallway, backing up into the room to join us. His ass wasn't a pleasant thing to have blocking a doorway.

Down the hall I saw what appeared to be bodies with fleshy clumps hanging from tattered forms, trailing strands of rotten viscera. One was wearing a nurse hat, lop-sided on its head. Beady little eyes that were the pits of despair, gaping and hollow, milky white and dry stared at us. They recalled a pack of rats, the flickering lighting down the ruptured, tilting hall casting them in an unnaturally unnecessary addition to the horror they created in me. Thankfully, there were no buzz saws to be had on any of these wretches from what I saw.

Without hesitation, Gangrene leveled her rifle and unloaded a round, cocking the lever to fire

again, and unloading successive shots as quickly as possible into the approaching horde. With another hoof, she pushed Curbstomp towards the door, “Get the fuck out there and slow them down! We can’t stay in this deathtrap!”

The moment Curbstomp was out the door, sputtering his utter disapproval of such a plan, he was blindsided from the left by a rotten husk and taken to the ground. He cried out, trying to push the ghoul off of him. I drew my revolver and sent a few rounds into the creature’s side to no avail. The stallion screamed as the ghoul began to tear a chunk out of his foreleg.

The ghouls rushed in, the smell of blood having been a dinner-bell to them, and tried to get an opening at Curbstomp, who could do nothing but scream in abject terror. They were trying to eat him, and he was trying to avoid that grisly fate. The pale-yellow unicorn continued to unload her rifle into the group, teeth exposed in a fierce snarl.

“Ahhh, Help me, Ah f-fuck help me!” The mad stallion cried, crossing his legs over his body defensively, one ghoul sought out the side of his face and bit down, tearing a strip from his cheek and jaw, chunks were missing out of him, and some of the ‘meat’ was passing through the mouths of the ghouls and dropping from their torn open bellies.

I grabbed the shotgun from the saddle-mount and tore it off, taking aim over the group and leveling them with a fierce roar of buckshot, splintering one ghoul above the head, its tongue flailing at the air in a spray of sickly juice and skull matter, it slumped over motionless.

“We need to go, come on!” The unicorn tugged on my coat with a hoof, “Once they’re done with him, we’re next!”

“But he’s still alive!” I argued, firing another shotgun blast into the group, felling two of the ghouls that had began piling upon the unfortunate victim. I felt pity, regret, and suddenly, rage. I didn’t know who I was, but I knew for certain I wouldn’t let someone die in such a horrible way. Even if they had wronged me like that screaming, flailing smelly bastard had.

“He’s already dead! There’s no way we can save him! Let’s just get out of here!” Gangrene screamed at me between shots with her rifle, taking out a new advancing ghoul that had come tearing down the hall towards our ‘haven’.

I threw the empty shotgun down, and possessed by thoughts not my own, I selected the heavy

metal table of the delivery room as a weapon, tore it from its mountings and spun, releasing it towards the doorway with as much force as I could. The staples darting along my body strained and several tore. The table broke through the frame of the doorway and leveled the group like the flat edge of a massive hammer.

Not breaking stride, not even thinking, I grabbed hold of Curbstomb's bleeding form and skid him behind me into the delivery room to Gangrene. The floor had begun to sag, the heavy table having bounced where the earth stallion's shotgun had weakened a section of the floor.

Gangrene was gaping; having just seen what she thought was merely a hard ass doctor throw a metal table like an unorthodox bludgeon. She shook her head swiftly, 'Fine, you take care of those fucks. I'll take care of this wounded asshole! You better not die.'

No, I wasn't going to die. I was going to take out all my aggression on these horrid creatures, the still twitching husks began to get up and lurch after me. I readied myself, drawing my .38 from its home again and struggling to load it with a new set of shells. 'What is your name?' 'What is your name?' Echoed in my mind numbingly without answer, I didn't care who I was. I leveled my weapon and fired.

Oh, here we go! This is simply magical--Please refer to this below for the character tracker;
[Chapter 1 Progress](#)